



Montana DNRC Forestry Division

FIRE AND AVIATION MANAGEMENT

Aviation

Equipment Development
and Support

Fire Preparedness

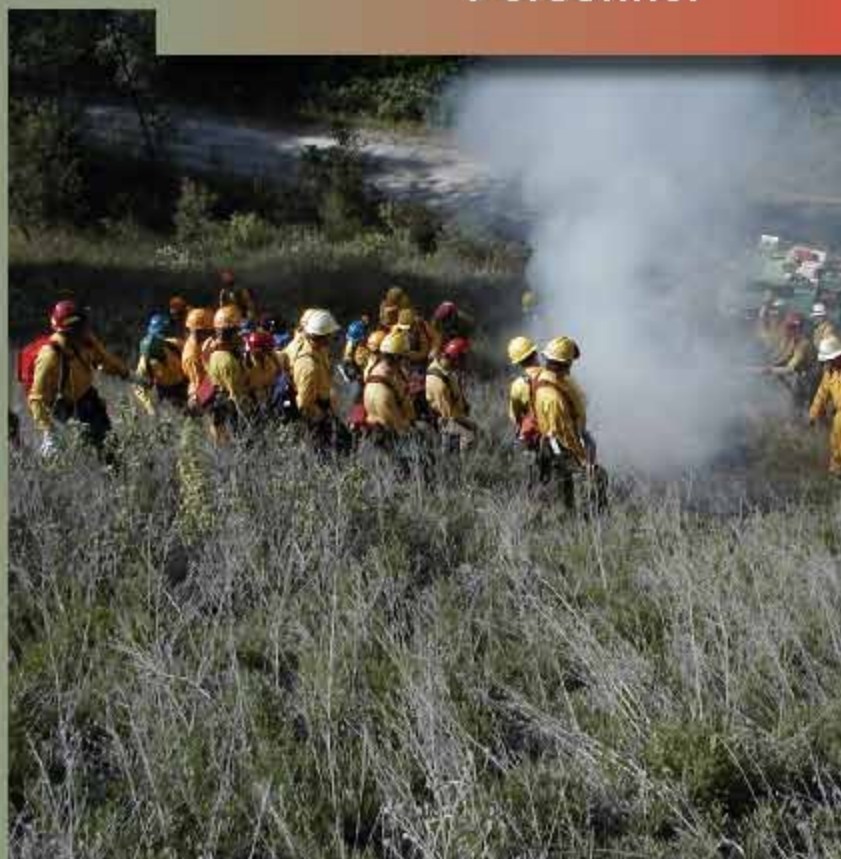
Fire Prevention

Fire Suppression

Training

Training

*Ensuring Professionally Trained
and Highly Qualified Firefighting
Personnel*



Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Forestry Division Fire and Aviation Management Bureau Training

The Montana DNRC is required by statute to provide training to state firefighters and other cooperators who require training as part of its wildfire management responsibilities. In addition to providing training, DNRC also maintains records of firefighters' training, experience, qualifications, and certifications, to help ensure that appropriately trained personnel are available to meet Montana's wildfire management staffing needs.

DNRC has developed a comprehensive training program that supports all fire management activities including activities such as fire prevention, detection, and prescribed burns in addition to fire suppression. The program seeks to meet the highest possible professional standards of firefighter training for safe, effective, and efficient wildfire management. The agency delivers dozens of training courses each year to its own permanent and seasonal firefighting personnel and to State/County Cooperative Fire Program personnel in every county in the state, offering both national-standard and state-customized training.

DNRC also participates in the design, development, and delivery of interagency training programs which offer more advanced training for firefighting personnel. Highly-qualified and experienced personnel receive training at the highest levels for positions in incident command and management.

Goal

Ensure employees and cooperators are able to accomplish established performance requirements in fire prevention, detection, pre-suppression, and suppression tasks.

Investment in Training Pays Dividends in Terms of Safety, Effectiveness, and Cost Containment

Safety is the most important consideration in DNRC's wildfire management training and operations. The emphasis on safety, including strict adherence to the Firefighter Code of Conduct, is responsible for DNRC's outstanding safety record, and the agency is continually seeking to strengthen its safety program. DNRC's highly-trained firefighters are effective, and have exceed the agency's goal of suppressing 95% of all direct protection wildfires at 10 acres or less. Volunteer firefighters who have received training from DNRC can be found in every county in the state, and play an important role in rapid initial attack and wildfire suppression. Effective initial attack protects lives, property, and resources, helps minimize risks to firefighters, and helps to control the cost of fighting wildfires.

Accomplishments FY 2004

Training courses offered by DNRC	125
DNRC and local government firefighters receiving training through DNRC-sponsored courses	2,173
DNRC, local government, and interagency participants receiving training through the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group	2,925
DNRC and local government personnel receiving upper level fire management training at the Northern Rockies Training Center, National Advanced Fire and Resource Institute, and National Fire Academy	74



Training Personnel for Safe, Efficient, and Cost-Effective Wildfire Management

Successful management of wildfires requires highly-trained and qualified personnel; cost-effective management requires just the right number of personnel with the proper mix of training, skills, and experience to carry out DNRC's wildfire management responsibilities. DNRC makes use of national qualification standards, a sophisticated system for tracking the qualification and experience of firefighters, and cooperation with federal, tribal, and local government partners to help ensure that wildfire management efforts in Montana are staffed by highly-qualified personnel and are safe, efficient, and cost effective.

DNRC's Wildland Fire Safety Record

Serious injuries: 0
Shelter deployments: 0
Fatalities: 0

Training offered by DNRC meets, at minimum, standards established by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's (NWCG) Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System, and may exceed those standards to meet agency objectives. The NWCG's system establishes minimum interagency standards for training, knowledge, skills, experience, and physical fitness for wildland and prescribed fire positions. The cooperating agencies have agreed to these national standards as a means to train firefighting personnel for national mobilization purposes, allowing personnel to be mobilized outside their own geographic area.

An important tool used by DNRC to assess staffing and training needs for fire management is the Incident Qualification System (IQS). The IQS is a records management system that documents training, experience, physical fitness, and other data for firefighting personnel. With this system, DNRC can readily determine the number of personnel qualified and certified for various wildfire management positions. That information, together with historic data on wildfire occurrences and firefighting operations, helps DNRC determine the annual training needed to meet the staffing required to fulfill the agency's fire protection responsibilities.



Firefighters practice constructing a fireline.



Firefighters practice deploying fire shelters.



Participants in a backpack test used to assess physical fitness.

DNRC designs, develops, and conducts training for permanent DNRC employees, seasonal firefighting personnel, and fire departments throughout Montana. DNRC coordinates with federal, tribal, and local agencies in the design, development, and delivery of more advanced courses as a member of the interagency Northern Rockies Coordinating Group (NRCG). Qualified DNRC and local government personnel may receive training through the NRCG, including upper level courses offered at the Northern Rockies Training Center in Missoula. Each year a few highly qualified personnel participate in the highest

levels of training offered by the National Advanced Fire and Resource Institute and the National Fire Academy.

DNRC is a training leader not just in Montana, but at the national level as well. Montana led development of the IQS, which is sponsored by the National Association of State Foresters and used by most states. DNRC represents 17 western states and Guam on the NWCG's Training Working Team, which addresses national training issues and develops national standards such as the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System.

Comprehensive Training Designed to Meet Montana's Needs

DNRC's comprehensive training program addresses all areas of wildfire management, including fire prevention, investigation, detection, suppression (activities to prepare for suppression), suppression, and prescribed fire. Training supports all positions needed for wildfire management, including command, operations, aviation, planning, logistics, finance, and dispatch.

The foremost goal of DNRC's training is to enable personnel to safely perform their jobs in wildfire or prescribed fire situations. Additionally, DNRC seeks to develop firefighters' ability to perform effectively and efficiently in their jobs. Training is also a part of career development for DNRC's permanent firefighting personnel. Qualified personnel can pursue the training need for leadership and command positions in wildland fire management.

Many of the courses offered by DNRC are custom-tailored to be time and cost effective while simultaneously meeting national standards and qualifications for wildland firefighting. Many national courses are too broad in scope to meet DNRC's specific training needs, and do not offer the hands-on practice that DNRC has found to be much more effective in achieving training goals in a shorter timeframe. DNRC's instructors are highly experienced

and meet national accreditation requirements.

DNRC is responsible for the annual certification and recertification of its permanent and seasonal firefighting personnel. The seasonal firefighting workforce numbers about 150 firefighters, each of whom receives 45 to 60 days of training during the season. All certification is performance based, and awarded following assessment by one or more evaluators.



Helicopter operations training is conducted at Lubrecht Experimental Forest each June.



Participants and instructors in a course offered by the County Assistance Team.

Training for the State/County Cooperative Fire Program

All counties in Montana participate in the State/County Cooperative Fire Program, and have signed agreements with the state to fight wildland fires on state and private lands not protected by an existing fire agency. In return, DNRC provides training and equipment, and assists counties when fires exceed their capabilities. DNRC has developed a number of courses specifically for this program.

Most of the firefighters in the State/County Program are volunteers with full time jobs and limited opportunities to take time off for training. Most volunteer fire departments have very small budgets, and very limited funds for training. DNRC offers its training at no cost to the counties, and also administers a grants programs

which enables qualified local government personnel to participate in more advanced wildfire training courses. DNRC takes its courses to the counties, and

has designed its courses to be as time efficient as possible, allowing volunteer firefighters with busy lives to take part. Both the state and local communities benefit; more lands are protected from wildfire, and local fire departments now are capable of fighting fires that would have required assistance from DNRC in previous years. The standardized training offered by DNRC has also improved mutual aid responses between

fire departments. Firefighters are prepared and capable of working effectively in cooperation with firefighters from other departments when needed.



Volunteer fire fighters in Choteau County.